Title: From Citizens to Enemy Aliens: A Comprehensive Study on the Japanese Canadian Internment Experience

Name of Scholar: Anamika Sukul

Supervisor: Professor Somdatta Mandal

Registration no. VB-1420 of 2011-12

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Synopsis

Japan's bombing of Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941 gave rise to a domestic problem in Canada because of the presence of a considerable number of residents of Japanesedescent in the country, mostly concentrated in the province of British Columbia. Soon after, on February 26, 1942, the Canadian federal government ordered the expulsion of 22,000 people of Japanese origin living within a one-hundred mile radius of the Pacific coast. There was no trial or hearing; the steps were taken under the banner of "national security." Seventy-five percent of those interned were Canadian citizens (either by birth or naturalization); however their citizenship status hardly made any difference – tagged as "dangerous enemy aliens," the government made no attempt to distinguish between the loyal citizens and the "suspicious." Thatorder marked the beginning of a process that saw Canada's entire Japanese minority being uprooted from their homes, stripped of their property, and interned in isolated camps for a period of seven long years. The Second World War internment was a predominantly American phenomenon -- in the United States, over 110, 000 Japanese Americans were expelled from the West coast and incarcerated in ten internment camps. Canada as a neighbouring country followed the big brother's footsteps in taking decisive measures against its own persons of Japanese origin which, in many ways, was very unique, at times harsher and even worse than the American one.

This forced expulsion, which the BC government euphemistically named an "evacuation" (so as to fall into theGeneva Convention), was in fact, a part of the strategy to eliminate the Japanese presence on the West Coast. In this study, the term "internment" will be used to encompass all the events that resulted from the abrogation of Japanese Canadian rights of citizenship—mass uprooting from their homes and communities, the dispossession and the forced relocation to camps. The internment episode changed the whole dynamics of the life of Japanese Canadians, and gave rise to a whole body of literature that includes socio-historical accounts, diaries, autobiographies, letters, oral narratives, memoirs, fiction and also poetry. This proposed thesis will attempt to give an in-depth analysis of the Japanese Canadian internment experience, as well as explore the diverse and complex ways it affected the lives of the internees.

This study will be tentatively divided into five chapters, including the Introduction and the Conclusion. The Introductory chapter will give a brief outline of the entire research work, the scope and rationale of the study, and a note on the terminology. Here we will try finding answers to the primary questions: what exactly is internment, why did this happen, and so on. A brief historical background of the Japanese community in Canada will be included, so as to outline the context of the study. Canada, under William Lyon Mackenzie King, entered the War earlier than

the United States. But Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour changed the situation, as her big brother America was also now at war with an Axis country. That takes us to the next point of discussion – what was so unique about the Japanese Canadian internment, or, in what ways were their experiences different from the Japanese residents of the other nations who suffered the internment?

The Second chapter of the thesis will attempt to make a thorough study of the factual manifestations of the internment phase. This chapter will be subdivided into two sections. The first section will analyse the declassified government documents pertaining the evacuation -- BCSC reports/correspondences, reportssubmitted by the Department of Labour, Orders in Council 1941-49 – which can be brought together to trace the manner in which the "evacuation" policy came to be formulated. The second section of this chapter will try to analyse the personal records of the internees, documenting their wartime experiences – namely in the form of letters and correspondences, diaries and memoirs. They are significant because an interpretation of these personal experiences, when set beside the government documents, will help to present a fuller and more accurate picture than just what the "official" account provides. A study ofthis critical chapter will rely heavily on the factual evidences – both the declassified governmentdocuments and the personal records of former internees – as they are a source of historical "truth," and thus they are a primary reference for this study.

Chapter Three intends to discuss the fictional representations of the Japanese Canadian internment. One can find a long list of internment fictions by Japanese American writers; however, in Canada, there is only a limited number of fictional writers on the same subject, the most notable of whom are Joy Kogawa and Kerri Sakamoto. The most obvious reason for this meagre fictional output seems to be their utmost desire to forget the bitter memories and getassimilated in the Canadian "mosaic." This study will encompass two major fictional works – *Obasan* (1981) by Joy Kogawa and *Electric Field* (1998) by Kerri Sakamoto. This chapter will also be further divided into two sections. The first section will attempt to analyse these two novels as works on the internment. Here different theoretical concepts -- like "bare lives" and historical trauma -- will be applied into the critical discussion of the concerned narratives. In the process of the narrative analysis, special light will be thrown on the damage inflicted on the characters' psychology due to the destruction of their individual community. More importantly, it will try to focus on the feeling of brokenness – the grief, the psychological scars -- that is still carried on in the bodies and minds of the former Japanese internees and their successive generations. How significant has the Redress Settlement (signed on 1988) been to put an end to their trauma? Questions like these are crucial, and this paper attempts to explore possible answers to these questions in the realm of literature, -- by analysing literary representations of this unprecedented historical incident (and its lingering aftermath) in Kerri Sakamoto's *The Electric Field* and Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*. The second section of this chapter will try to study the differences/ conflicts/ tensions that existed between the successive generations of Japanese Canadians who lived through the internment phase – mainly the *Issei* (the first generation Japanese), the *Nisei* (second generation, most of whom were born in Canada) and the *Sansei* (the third generation). And this intergenerational study will be undertaken through an analysis of the characters as represented in each of the two novels.

The Fourth chapter of this proposed dissertation will provide a comparative reading of the Japanese Canadian internment versus the German and Italian Canadian internment during

those World War II years. Although the procedures at the War Measures Acts were officially taken in order to protect white Canadians from war enemies, -- which included not only Japan, but also Italy and Germany -- the measures taken against Japanese Canadian citizens were not the same as those taken against German and Italian immigrants or descents. This analysis is important and relevant in the sense that it will help to give a fuller and more accurate picture of the entire injustice meted out to the entire Japanese community under the banner of "national security." As for German Canadians and Italian Canadians, they were also considered enemy aliens under the War Measure Act – but there is a vast difference between the type of measures taken against them and the persons of Japanese descent. A thorough study of this aspect will throw a new light on the anti- Asian sentiments – with a "visible minority" status -- that were very much current in Canada (and particularly on the west coast) during the 20th century.

The fifth chapter is the concluding chapter and it will specifically aim to elucidate how this entire history of forced removal is understood by the young present-day Canadians (both of Japanese descent and the non-Japanese)who were not a part of this historical process at all. What is their experience of growing up in the aftermath of the internment? As James Young, writing on the holocaust memories, poses the question: how can we know the holocaust except through the many ways in which it is handed down to us? The concluding section will try to study the many ways the stories about the Japanese internment have been handed down to people across generations, and over the years.We need to investigate if they all are aware of this part of history – and find out their reactions regarding the same. Such an approach will help us mark the relevance of this historical incident in today's world, and lead us to many definite answers regarding Canada's image as an all-inclusive multicultural nation. Do the present times promise the emergence of an idea of nationhood that would be more inclusive in its stance? Questions like these are crucial and will be attempted in the course of the study.

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